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IMPARTIAL INQUIRIES,

RESPECTING THE

P R O G R E S S

OF THE

BAPTIST DENOMINATION.

—♦♦♦♦♦—
By NOAH WORCESTER, A. B.
PASTOR OF THE CHURCH IN THORNTON.

WHO CAN UNDERSTAND HIS ERRORS ?—DAVID.

I SPEAK AS UNTO WISE MEN, JUDGE YE WHAT I SAY.—ST. PAUL.

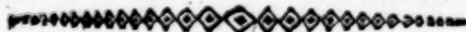
PRINTED AT WORCESTER, MASSACHUSETTS,
By LEONARD WORCESTER.

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IMPARTIAL INQUIRIES.



INTRODUCTION.



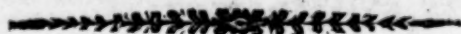
HAT there has been, within twenty years, a rapid increase of the baptist denomination, is a fact too evident to be disputed. And that this increase is viewed, by many of them, as an evidence of the rectitude of their *peculiar sentiments*, is too well known to be denied. If this evidence is valid, it ought not to be rejected ; but if otherwise, it is desirable that the mistake should appear.

The design of the following pages is to investigate the truth respecting this matter ; and to set it in such a light, that every one may be able to judge with propriety. And, to do justice to the subject, the following method is proposed :

I. Inquire, whether the increase of the baptist denomination is any certain evidence of the rectitude of their *peculiar sentiments* ?

II. Inquire

II. Inquire, whether other probable causes of the prevalence of their sentiments, or increase of their numbers, may not be assigned ?



S E C T. I.

Whether the Increase of the Baptist Denomination be any certain Evidence of the Rectitude of their peculiar Sentiments ?

IF the great prevalence of the baptist denomination is any certain evidence of the truth or rectitude of their peculiar sentiments, it must be for this reason, viz. *That such prevalence is peculiar to truth.* If it is as common for error to prevail, as it is for truth, then neither truth, nor error, can be known by their prevalence. For, that which is *common* to *two things* can never distinguish the *one* from the *other*. If afflictions, in the present state, were peculiar to the wicked, then we could know, that those who are afflicted are also ungodly. But, as afflictions are the common lot of both the righteous and the wicked, neither of them can be known by their being subject to calamities. Consequently, if it should appear, that it is as common for error to be prevalent, as it is for truth, we may as well argue that *minks* are *bears*, because they are *black*, as that the *baptist sentiments* are *right*, because they *prevail*.

Therefore, to determine the point in question, we have only to determine, whether such prevalence, as the Baptists boast of, is *peculiar to truth*. I will proceed on the supposition that their evidence

dence is valid ; or that such prevalence is peculiar to truth ; and see what can be made to appear upon this ground.

1. It will appear, that the peculiar sentiments of Mahomet have vast evidence in their favor, and that the Alcoran is a system of truth. For the prevalence of these sentiments has been very great, both as to rapidity and extent. And they are now generally believed, in some of the greatest empires on earth.

2. The peculiar sentiments of the Papists must be set down as indisputable truth ; for their prevalence has been greater than the Baptists, in proportion as hundreds to one.

3. We find sufficient evidence in favor of Protestantism, though directly opposed to Popery.

4. We find much greater evidence in favor of the Pedit-baptists than we do in favor of the Baptists. For their sentiments have been more prevalent, and their numbers are still much the greatest.

5. Universalism, Methodism and Shakerism, have much evidence in their favor ; and we must begin to admit Deism to have a place in the system of truth.

6. It will appear, that divine providence is of such a nature, that it will prove the truth of both parts of palpable contradictions. That opposite sentiments may be true at the same time. That the same doctrine may be true in one age, and false in another ; and true in one country or one denomination, and false in another. For,

7. If the baptist sentiment prevailed in the apostles' days, it was then true. Then the pedit-baptist sentiment took place and prevailed, and that was true.

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The baptist sentiment has again revived, and is again true. Now, both these contradictory sentiments *prevail*, and now they are both *true*.

These observations, it is thought, will be sufficient to satisfy every mind, that is open to conviction, that the propriety of a sentiment can never be proved from its prevalence.

The plea, in favor of the rectitude of the baptist sentiments, will probably be renewed, by observing, that their preachers are not only successful in gaining profelytes to their party, but their labors are blessed for the conviction and conversion of finners.

I have no inclination to deny, that this has been, in many instances, the case ; but whether this is a proof of the propriety of their peculiar sentiments may be rationally disputed. Let us query : Is it preaching their *peculiar sentiments*, wherein they differ from Pedit-baptists, which is attended with this supposed good success ? Or, does this good success attend their preaching the more important doctrines of the gospel, in which they and the Pedit-baptists agree ? If the latter, then their success is no evidence in favor of their peculiar sentiments : But, if the former, it will admit of a doubt, whether their supposed converts are any thing more than mere profelytes to their party. For it must be evident, that preaching those sentiments, in which they differ from Pedit-baptists, has no great tendency to convince finners of their deplorable state by nature, or their need of a Savior.

On supposition that the peculiar sentiments of the Baptists are right, preaching that persons should not be baptized before they believe, and that immersion
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is essential to the ordinance, in opposition to the Pedit-baptists, has no more tendency to produce genuine conviction, or saving conversion, than preaching the Newtonian system of philosophy, in opposition to the Peripateticks. Either of them might serve to correct some mistakes in sentiment and practice ; but neither of them were the doctrines, by which Christ and his apostles arrested the consciences of men, and led them to cry out, *What shall we do to be saved ?* It is hoped, that no one will here understand me, that attending to the *nature* and *design* of baptism has no tendency to saving conversion. In attending to these, the most important doctrines of the gospel may be urged. And to these the Pedit-baptists may attend, consistently with their sentiments, in which they differ from the Baptists. But,

Further, if saving success proves the truth of the peculiar sentiments of the Baptists, it is presumed, that the peculiar sentiments of the Pedit-baptists may be proved on the same ground. And thus, again, both parts of the contradiction must be admitted into the system of truth.



S E C T. II.

Whether other probable Causes of the PREVALENCE of the Baptist SENTIMENTS, or INCREASE of their NUMBERS, may not be assigned ?

BEFORE I proceed to mention the probable causes of the prevalence of the baptist sentiments, it may be proper to premise the following things, viz.

1. That

1. That it is justly esteemed unreasonable to blame a whole denomination for the faults of individuals. Therefore, when I mention any imprudences or irregularities of the baptist denomination, or of their elders and teachers, I would not be understood to mean, that the whole are chargeable with such things. I am far from thinking this to be the case. Some of that denomination, both in publick and private capacities, are persons, for whom I have a high esteem.

2. My personal acquaintance with those of the baptist denomination is very small. And most of the things, which I shall bring into view, are from information, but such information as appears to me credible. Therefore, I shall generally express myself by way of inquiry ; and if any things unfavorable, respecting their practice, should be mentioned, which are not otherwise evident to the minds of the publick, I wish to have them esteemed as of no weight.

3. It was no ill treatment, which I ever received from any of that denomination, which induced me to exhibit what will appear in these pages. Nor have I any reference, in mentioning irregularities, to any persons in my own society, of that denomination. There are but a few among us. Those few are persons of whom I have no reason to complain ; but, on the contrary, they are persons who demand my respect.

4. It is, perhaps, a more difficult matter to write upon this subject, with a single eye, and in such a manner as to give no just occasion of offence, than would be generally supposed. And it is, perhaps, as difficult for those on the opposite side of the question, to read in such a manner as *not to take offence*, when no just occasion of offence is given. Publications of
this

this kind are too often written, and read, as paper wars, and the fruit of bitterness or envy. And I think I feel in some measure sensible of the danger on my own part. It is, in many respects, an undesirable task, which I have undertaken : And I find great difficulty in expressing, what I suppose to be truth, in such a manner as to be inoffensive. But it has, for some time, appeared to me a matter of importance, that something of this kind should be published, for the good of the church in general. I must, therefore, proceed, leaving the event with him, who has the hearts of all in his hand.

And as it is probable that the increase of the baptist denomination is partly owing to faults in us, it may be proper to begin, by an implicit confession of our own deficiencies. Therefore,

I. Has not the great coldness of ministers and private professors, of our denomination, contributed much to the increase of the Baptists ?

It is agreeable to the dictates of reason and common sense, that things of great importance should be treated as such ; and the consciences of men, in general, testify, that the things of religion are things of the first importance. Hence, they are naturally led to expect that ministers and private Christians, who are truly godly, will manifest it in preaching and practice.

Zeal in a preacher naturally inclines his hearers in his favor. They conclude that he feels interested in what he says ; that he loves the truth, and loves their souls. • On the other hand, coldness in a preacher prejudices the minds of his hearers against him. They are apt to suppose that his indifferency is as great in *reality* as it is in *appearance*.

And is it not a truth, to be lamented, that during the great progress of the Baptists, there has been great apparent coldness, and want of fervency, among our denomination ; both in ministers and private Christians. And have not the Baptists, especially their preachers, been more apparently engaged ? May it not, then, be supposed, that many have been prejudiced in favor of the peculiar sentiments of the Baptists, by the apparent difference between us and them, as to engagedness in religion ?

That the zeal, which has been discovered among the Baptists, has been, in all instances, according to *knowledge*, or *piety*, I will not pretend to say. But whether they have discovered a greater degree of engagedness, than is correspondent to the *importance* of *religion*, is a question which deserves our serious consideration. And if we find they have not, let us cast the *beam* out of our own *eye*, that we may see more clearly how to correct their errors and irregularities.

II. Has not the prevalence of the Baptists been, in some measure, owing to the unreasonable, unhappy, and imprudent manner, in which they have been too often treated, by our denomination ?

Love and tenderness, meekness and humility, joined with scriptural and rational arguments, are the most efficacious weapons, for convincing the ignorant, and reclaiming the erroneous. To treat persons of different persuasions in religion, with a bitter censorious spirit, or with ridicule, reproach and contempt, has, in the common course of providence, a direct tendency to increase their numbers, and strengthen their party. And such an error in temper is a much greater

greater evil, than any error in sentiment, which can be named.

But is it not manifest that, in too many instances, the weapons of our warfare with them, have been carnal, even in the worst sense of the term? Have not the whole denomination often been branded, indiscriminately, for the faults of individuals? Have not individuals been treated with disrespect, for this reason only, viz. That they were Baptists? And has not our treatment of them given too much ground for their cry of *persecution*? If so, no doubt we have been instrumental of increasing their numbers.

III. May not the prevalence of the baptist denomination be in a great measure accounted for, by the following things? The abundant pains which is taken, by their teachers, to inculcate their sentiments: Their considering their sentiments as so essential: The confident manner, and affecting tone, with which they address the passions of their hearers.

A great part of hearers, in all societies, are of such low understandings, that they are incapable of duly examining the force of arguments; and may be confounded by the length or multiplicity of them, while no real conviction is afforded to their minds. And when a preacher, by his zeal and address, has gained the affections of his hearers, so far, that they esteem him to be a pious man, and one who is really seeking their good, they are, in a great measure, prepared to give credit to what he says, whether they can see the propriety of it or not. And if the teacher labors abundantly, to prove a doubtful point, he will overpower their minds, and prevail upon them to believe he is right, before they understand his arguments.

And

And when sentiments are urged as of such essential importance in religion, as to constitute a test of christian communion at the Lord's table ; and asserted with such an air of confidence and infallibility, as though no rational being could hesitate a moment, whether they be true or false ; and with a mournful affecting tone of voice, calculated to move the passions, it is easy enough to see what must be the consequence, as to many persons, in almost every society. There is a class of persons, in most societies, who possess weak judgments, fickle minds, and quick and tender passions. These persons seem to be calculated, by nature, to be imposed upon, and captivated by such a method of propagating sentiments. And a person of good judgment, who is acquainted with his own society, may guess beforehand, with some degree of certainty, who would embrace the baptist sentiment, if they were repeatedly and frequently addressed, in the manner which has been described. This observation is not designed, by any means, as a reflection upon that class of persons. They are not to be treated as objects of contempt ; but of pity and compassion. Nor was this observation designed to intimate, that all, who embrace the baptist sentiments, are of such a turn of mind.

Now let me ask, Do not many of the baptist teachers labor abundantly; both in publick and private, to propagate their peculiar sentiments : Even to that degree, which would naturally lead persons, of weak minds, to suppose, that the essence of religion consists in embracing those sentiments ? Do they not assert their sentiments, with such an air of confidence as is unbecoming a fallible creature ? Do they not artfully
make

• make use of an affecting tone of voice, to raise the tide of tender passions in their hearers, so that the judgments of many are drowned by the flood? Do they not, in a particular manner, adopt these modes of address, at the time of administering the ordinance of baptism? Do they not then pay much more attention, in their addresses, to the necessity of the outward form, than to the necessity of having the heart right with God? And, from their manner of treating the subject, may not hearers rationally conclude that, in their view, the essence of following Christ consists rather in immersion, than in a meek and humble spirit? Or, that going into the water is the best evidence of such a temper? Whether the sentiments of the Baptists be true, or false, this must be evident, to discerning minds, that such a method of inculcating them is erroneous and dangerous; that it is much more calculated to make *real hypocrites*, than *real Christians*. And, whatever may be the views and designs of such teachers, their method of proceeding has, at least, the *appearance* of greater regard to a *party interest*, than to the *general good* of Christ's kingdom.

IV. May not another source of the increase of the baptist denomination be this, The abundant use they make of such passages of scripture as are nothing to their purpose.

To disprove infant baptism, do they not abundantly produce such texts as these: Repent and be baptized. As many as gladly received the word were baptized. If thou believest with all thine heart thou mayest, &c.

What we find of the practice of the apostles, in these texts, is very sufficient to prove that they baptized

tized penitents or believers : And that of adult persons they required a profession of cordial belief, in order to baptism. But that they afford no evidence against infant baptism, I think, must be evident to every discerning and impartial inquirer.

To try the matter fairly, let it be remembered, that these passages respect the preaching and practice of the apostles, at the commencement of the gospel dispensation. Now, suppose that we should find similar accounts in the journals of Mr. David Brainerd ; That, when he went among the Indians, he preached unto them, Repent and be baptized. And that as many as gladly received the word were baptized. And on a certain day, as he was discoursing with a sachem, the sachem appeared to be truly penitent, and desired to be baptized. Mr. Brainerd replied, If thou believest with all thine heart thou mayest. If we were to determine Mr. Brainerd's sentiments, by such passages as these, who would be able to say whether he was a Baptist or a Pedit-baptist ?

It is presumed that what is recorded of the practice of the apostles, is nothing inconsistent with what would be the practice of a Pedit-baptist, in any place, where the ordinance had never been administered.

Most certainly, if I were to preach in such a place, I should tell my hearers that they should believe before they are baptized. Those who gladly received the word I should baptize. And if a person desired to be baptized, I should insist on a profession of *cordial* belief in order to baptism. And if such an account of my preaching and practice, would prove me to be a Baptist in sentiment, I am one already.

V. May

V. May not the progress of the Baptists be partly accounted for, by their taking the advantage of certain occurrences in towns and parishes; to propagate their sentiments? Such as times of revival; divisions in societies; disaffection to settled ministers, &c.

Times of revival. At such seasons, the minds of people are generally very tender; and they are easily led into the sentiments of such as appear zealous for their good. And, if they are made to believe that baptism by immersion is such an essential point in religion, as the Baptists represent it to be, they will readily think, that, to embrace their sentiments, will be a great step towards salvation. And so, from selfish motives, may readily comply.

Is it not a known fact, with regard to many baptist teachers, that they take the advantage of such seasons to make proselytes? That they flock in, show great zeal, and soon turn the attention of the people from the concerns of their souls, to the dispute about baptism? I am far from being opposed to their showing themselves forward to promote religion, and the work of conversion, at such times: Yet I am apt to think that such a method of proceeding looks more like a stratagem of Satan, to put a stop to a revival, and to introduce division and animosity. And if the consequences of such proceedings have not been sufficient to justify the observation, then let it fall to the ground.

Divisions in societies. It often happens that such events take place, with regard to building meeting houses, settling ministers, &c. These are mournful occurrences; and such as call for the exertion of Christians, not to confirm and increase them, but to
heat

heal them. Blessed are the peace makers. But whether some of the baptist ministers have not, by their conduct respecting such divisions, formed an opposite character, shall be referred to the publick to determine.

Disaffection to settled ministers. It is not to be expected, that the most faithful ministers will give universal satisfaction. And here it may be asked, is it not a common method, with some baptist teachers, to take the advantage of such occurrences to propagate their sentiments, and establish a party? Is it not their common method to make their first visits to disaffected persons? And to conduct, as though it were there object to establish the disaffection, and to make a party, rather than to study the things which make for peace?

VI. Another source of addition to the baptist denomination may be this, Their urging their success as an evidence of the rectitude of their sentiments, and their publishing their progress annually.

Is it not a very common thing for those of that denomination to mention and urge the prevalence of their sentiments, as an argument that they are right, and that God owns and blesses them? If so, how many are so ignorant as to be led away by this fallacious argument? And when they see the annual accounts, how many were added in this, that, and the other place, it seems to them that the Baptists will carry all before them. And probably many have been almost, if not altogether, persuaded that the baptist sentiments are right, merely upon this ground.

The annual accounts published by the Baptists, of their success in gaining profelytes, have often brought

to my mind the words of Nebuchadnezzar : Is not this GREAT BABYLON WHICH I HAVE BUILT. And it is worthy of publick examination, whether this conduct has not the appearance of being designed to promote an interest, separate from the common interest of the Redeemer.

VII. May not covetousness, with regard to supporting the gospel, account for some of the additions made to the baptist denomination ?

Is it not a fact, of publick notoriety, that those who are most apparently covetous, with regard to supporting the gospel, are commonly the first, or among the first, who join that denomination, in societies in general ? Is it not obvious, to every impartial mind, that multitudes have left their own ministers, and joined the Baptists, while the general course of their conduct has testified that covetousness was their governing motive ? And have not some baptist teachers embraced such characters, and furnished them with certificates, without any rational evidence, that those persons were governed by any thing better than a covetous or contentious spirit ? If this is not downright *knavery*, I wish that somebody would favor me with a term, which will more suitably express the nature of such conduct.

VIII. Perhaps the increase of the baptist denomination may be further accounted for, by the following things : Their profession of great self-denial in being immersed : Telling how long they opposed or withstood the sentiment, and how loth they were to be convinced : With what force the evidence at last came upon their minds : What comfort they received, as soon as they were baptized : And their urging persons of weak minds to be baptized, as the way to obtain comfort.

These are artful methods of propagating sentiments, and perhaps as successful with many, as any which can be named. But, whether such methods are not better calculated to delude than to convince, is a question which ought to be examined.

That persons may be immersed, in the exercise of self-denial, will not be disputed; but they may also be immersed, from a principle of pride and selfishness. Persons may long resist a sentiment, be loth to embrace it, and afterwards yield to the force of arguments, which in their view are very powerful; and still the sentiment may be erroneous, and the arguments, by which they were persuaded, fallacious. Persons may also receive great comfort in their minds, upon going into the water. The comfort, in some instances, may be true; in others it may be false; but neither true comfort nor false comfort can prove the propriety of their sentiments. And, to urge a person, in trouble of mind, to go into the water, as the way to obtain christian comfort, is dangerous and delusive. Unless it be upon this ground: If a person's trouble of mind is supposed to result from bodily disorders; and the disorder is such that dipping is a suitable remedy, then it may be proper to urge a person to be dipped, as a suitable way to *restore* comfort to his mind. But I should not, in this case, recommend it to be done, in compliance with the ordinance of baptism.

IX. Has not gospel discipline, in pedo-baptist churches, been a source of some addition to the baptist denomination? Have not some persons, who have been censured or rejected, by our churches, fled for refuge to the baptist churches, rather than to make
gospel

gospel satisfaction? And have not some baptist ministers and churches received such characters, without requiring of them to make satisfaction for their offences?

From such a method of proceeding, people may be led to suspect one or other of the following things: Either,

1. That the baptist ministers and churches, who receive persons on this ground, suppose, that submission to the ordinance of baptism, by immersion, is of the nature of an atonement. Or,

2. That they view such submission as a satisfactory manifestation of true repentance. Or,

3. That they view the pedo-baptist churches to be so corrupt, that their censuring or rejecting a member is of the nature of a recommendation. Or,

4. That they are so fond of *enlarging* their *temple*, and *swelling* their *annual accounts*, that they are regardless, with respect to the *materials* or *characters*, which they admit.

X. May not *the want of qualifications*, in some of the baptist teachers, be considered as another source of increase to their denomination?

Many people are so ignorant, as to be more charmed with sound than sense. And to them, the want of knowledge in a teacher, or of instruction in his discourses, may easily be made up, and overbalanced, by great zeal, an affecting tone of voice, and a perpetual motion of the tongue. If a speaker can keep his tongue running, in an unremitting manner, during the time of exercise; and can quote, memoriter, a large number of texts from within the covers of the Bible, it matters not, to many of his hearers, whether he
speaks

speaks *sense* or *nonsense* ; or whether his quoting scripture be *pertinent* or *impertinent*. And when such persons hear a speaker, who has had but little advantage for education, preach in such a manner, and this too without forethought or study, as he may profess, and we may believe, they think he is most certainly called of God, that he is wonderfully assisted, and speaks as the Spirit gives him utterance. Ergo, he must be a good man, and his sentiments are doubtless right.

If, then, some of the baptist teachers are not scribes well instructed, and do preach in the manner suggested, is it not easy to see, that want of qualifications, in some of their teachers, may have contributed to the increase of the denomination ?

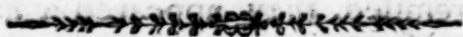
Were it my delight to dwell upon the faults of professing Christians, I could, perhaps, enlarge upon the things which have been mentioned, and add other particulars. But what has been said may be sufficient. If a deduction should be made, from the annual accounts, of all who have become Baptists, in profession, from the several sources, which have been named, it is thought that the diminution would be perceptible.

The foregoing inquiries are not designed to increase the disaffection between the two denominations ; but rather to discover some of the sources, from whence it has arisen to such a height, that each denomination may see in what respects reformation is necessary, in order to peace, harmony and friendship. And if such happy effects should be the consequence of the publication, the writer will be amply rewarded, while he shares in the increase of publick felicity.



A

FLIGHT OF IMAGINATION.



Some therefore cried one thing, and some another.

HAVING written the preceding sections, I was in some anxiety of mind about the expediency of sending them to the press; fearing they would be an occasion of mischief, rather than of benefit. With these thoughts upon my mind, I placed my head upon my pillow, with a view for some repose and refreshment. Scarcely had my eyes closed with sleep, before my imagination had published the pamphlet, and put it in circulation. And, on a sudden, I was waisted in disguise, from Dan to Beerseba, to learn what reception it found in the world.

The first night, I called for lodging at the house of a Pedeo-baptist, whose name was *Rigidus*. He had purchased one of the pamphlets; and invited his two neighbors, *Firebrand* and *Mercurio*, to examine the contents of the *new book*. When I entered the house, they had finished reading the first section. And such was my habit and appearance that it occasioned no interruption.

interruption. They professed to be tolerably satisfied with what they had read ; excepting, that the writer had implicitly granted, that, in many instances, the preaching of Baptists had been attended with saving success. *Firebrand* said, in plain terms, he did not believe that ever a soul was benefited by the preaching of a Baptist. *Rigidus* observed that he was much of the same mind. However, said he, I think that one of the main arguments, by which the Baptists propagate their sentiments, is fairly refuted.

They proceeded to the second section. In reading the things premised, they appeared a little sour ; especially, on finding that the writer had expressed so much charity for *some* of the Baptists. *Mercurio* thought that all the Baptists might, with propriety, be lumped together. For I do not believe, said he, there is one good Baptist in the land. *Firebrand* professed to be of the same opinion. He said he had been considerably acquainted with the Baptists, and had often attempted to reason with them ; but he had ever found them a stupid and bigoted set of beings, and that they would not hear to reason any more than a parcel of *coach horses*.

On reading the first mentioned source of increase to the baptist denomination, their faces redened with anger ; and, however *cold* they were in religion, they were far enough from being cold in their resentment, against what they read. When they read the second particular, they could no longer hold their peace. *Firebrand* said thus : This *fellow* is half a Baptist himself, or he never would have suspected that the Baptists had been ill treated. Then *Rigidus* spoke : For my part, I wish all the Baptists had been banished from

from the land twenty years ago. I wish so, too, said *Mercurio* ; for they are a pestilent race of beings, as ever lived : They are ever making mischief, wherever they go.

After these remarks, they proceeded to the third source of increase. And, by the change which appeared in their countenances, you would have been convinced, that some people are much more willing to hear others reprov'd, than they are to be reprov'd themselves. They had not read two pages before they appeared quite calm, and well pleased. And, as they proceeded from one particular to another, they appeared more and more delighted, and were very sorry to see *Finis* come so soon. Upon the whole, they all seem'd to agree in this, that had a few observations in the first section, and a few pages in the second, been omitted, the pamphlet might do considerable service.

Next morning, I pursu'd my journey, in quest of further information ; and, before evening, I had a pretty perfect contrast exhibited. In the after part of the day, I was riding in a road near a river ; and, on the bank, I espied a concourse of people. Suspecting the object, I immediately resorted thither. *Censorious Freetongue* was about to administer the ordinance of baptism, and was then addressing the multitude, to prepare their minds for the solemnity. I soon perceived that he had lately fill'd his head with the contents of the new book. For a great part of his address was compos'd of ridicule, invectives, and raillery, against what he call'd an *abusive pamphlet* lately published. Before he clos'd his address, he alter'd the tone of his voice, and dissolv'd himself, and

and many of his hearers, into affection and tears. "This, my beloved friends," said he, "is what we must expect, in consequence of our taking up the cross to follow Christ. We must be hated of the world, and suffer persecution. But fear not, nor be dismayed. They have called the master of the house Beelzebub ; and no wonder that we, his followers, are called so likewise."

The exercise being ended, I returned back to a neighboring house ; and soon after me came in *Furio*, *Blasius*, and *Gripus*, of the baptist denomination. And, as it happened, one of the *abusive pamphlets* laid on the table. *Furio* espied it, and taking it up, here, said he, is one of the very pamphlets that Elder Free-tongue was condemning. For a while, they scrupled the propriety of reading it ; but at length they agreed. While reading the first section they appeared to feel somewhat as Micah did on a certain occasion. They said there seemed to be some truth in the observations ; but still they believed it was written with an evil design against the Baptists. They however ventured upon the second section. The premised observations, they said, appeared to be a motley mixture of charity and severity. When they read the first *source* of increase to the Baptists, they appeared in some measure pleased. On reading the second, they were greatly delighted. *Furio* said, however, he thought more severity was needful, and he hoped to find it in the next particular. But they soon found their mistake ; and December never produced a more sudden change in the weather, than what took place in their countenances. What I then discovered brought to my mind the words of God to Cain : Why art thou
wroth

wroth, and why is thy countenance fallen? If thou doest well, shalt thou not be accepted? And if thou doest not well, sin lieth at the door. They continued reading until they had finished that particular, in which covetousness is considered as a source of increase; and then their patience was exhausted. *Gripius* roundly affirmed that he never before saw such a *blackguardly* piece in his life. *Furio* said he wondered that any man of sense should think of writing such stuff. *Blasphatus* observed that it was the very weakest piece that ever was written. And for my part, said he, I do not think the writer had much sense: If he had he would not have spent his time in such a foolish manner. With one consent, they doomed the pamphlet to flames; and what they said further about the writer it may be best to conceal. But, such was their clamor, that I concluded *the more part knew not wherefore they had come together*. And as they were likely to tarry all night, I perceived it would be no place for rest. So I mounted my horse and rode with expedition. After riding about three miles, I came to the house of one *Benevolus*, a Baptist. As it happened, there was, that evening, a meeting at his house of a society, called the *Fraternity*. It was composed partly of Baptists and partly of *Pedo-baptists*. The chief characters among them, I found to be, *Benevolus*, *Honestus* and *Confitensius*, of the baptist denomination; and of the *Pedo-baptists*, *Generoso*, *Amicus* and *Sobrietas*. There free and heavenly conversation caused me to think of the prayer of Christ for the unity of his members, and of the declaration which he made, *By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another*.

After a series of religious exercises, in which they all appeared to be near to God, and to one another, they began some conversation respecting the late pamphlet, which they all had seen and perused. They were not fond of spending time in lavishing praise upon the writer, or what he had written. Nor were they censorious. The most severe remark which I heard was this. *Amicus* said that he did not know but some things might have been expressed, to better advantage, in softer terms; but to the ideas he had no objection. His remark was expressed with so much meekness, that no rational creature could be offended. And I could but wish that I had discovered more of his spirit and wisdom in what I had written.

Benevolus said that he was very glad to see the faults of his own denomination held up to publick view, and he hoped it would be a publick benefit.

Generoso observed that he was glad to see so much impartiality discovered, in exhibiting the faults of both denominations. He thought it would have been very wrong to hold up the faults of one, and not the other, while it is so evident that both have been to blame.

Honestus remarked that the things mentioned, as faults in his denomination, had long been matter of grief to his mind. He said he had often mentioned, and as often lamented them.

Confitenfius confessed that he had reason to lament some of his own past conduct, which had been, by the pamphlet, brought fresh to his mind. And he rejoiced that any one would be so faithful as to reprove him.

Amicus spake again. I do not see how any reasonable person can be offended at what is written; but there

there are so many professed Christians, who cannot bear reproof, that I fear some of both denominations will take offence.

Sobrietas proposed for consideration, whether it would not be duty, for each of them, to labor with such of his own denomination as should appear disaffected; and endeavor to persuade them, to hearken to reason, and correct their faults. He further observed, that if the faults mentioned in the pamphlet were on both sides reformed, the two denominations would soon appear respectable in the eyes of each other; and much more to the honor of Christ in the eyes of the world. To which they all consented, with the greatest appearance of cordiality. And after uniting in humble prayer for the prosperity of Zion, they dissolved their meeting.

These several scenes convinced me of the propriety of the following proverbs. He that reproveth a scorner getteth to himself shame. Rebuke a wise man and he will love thee. A reproof entereth more into a wise man than an hundred stripes into a fool.

I spent the most of that night in agreeable conversation with Benevolus. Soon after I retired for sleep, my imagination favored me with a safe journey to my own house. I awoke, arose, and recollected the adventures of my imagination. I found the piece had not yet been sent to the press; but I felt encouraged to send it. And thought it might be expedient to annex the adventures for publick perusal. Readers are allowed to consider these adventures as a dream; but perhaps experience, and observation, may show that, in some respects, the thing is certain and the interpretation sure. The wise men of America will not conceive

conceive that so hard a task is imposed upon them, as was imposed by Nebuchadnezzar upon the wise men of Babylon. For I have told the dream, they have only to find out the interpretation.

P. S. One circumstance has been omitted, in the preceding narration. It was thought by Furio that Elder Freetongue had it in view to write an answer to the Impartial Inquiries.

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